

Week Ending Friday, December 31, 1993

Christmas Greeting to the Nation

December 25, 1993

The President. On this Christmas Day all over our Nation, Americans are gathering in celebration of faith and family and tradition.

Hillary Clinton. This season has a special magic. It may be cold outside, but we all feel an inner warmth. We are renewed with every kindness we give and receive. The celebration is as big as the world, and yet, it is as private as every Christmas wish that a child of any age has ever dreamed.

The President. So on this day, our greatest gift is the one within, the emergence and the sharing of our better selves. Our Christmas prayer is that each of us be given the strength to bring peace and good will to every community and to every American, especially to every child. Peace for them is our greatest wish.

We are especially grateful to the men and women of our Armed Forces who are overseas this holiday away from their own families, preserving the freedoms that the rest of us cherish. We wish all Americans a joyous and blessed holiday.

Merry Christmas.

Hillary Clinton. And a happy New Year.

NOTE: The greeting was videotaped at 12:40 p.m. on December 16 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for broadcast on December 25. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Radio Address

December 25, 1993

Good morning. On this Christmas morning, I won't keep you very long because I know many of you may still have presents under your trees waiting to be opened. But I do want to send my warmest Christmas greetings to all Americans.

For Hillary, Chelsea, and me, this is our first Christmas in Washington. We've taken great joy in decorating the White House with trees and ornaments and decorating our own Christmas tree upstairs in the residence. We've taken even greater joy in seeing our fellow Americans share in the beauty and the history of their house, the people's house, here in our Nation's Capital, as tens of thousands have come through to see the White House at Christmastime.

Like so many of you, we've been joined by relatives and friends. We've been reminded of all we have to be thankful for. For this holiday season is a time to remember what we value and what gives our lives meaning. Today Christians celebrate God's love for humanity made real in the birth of Christ in a manger almost 2,000 years ago. The humble circumstances of His birth, the example of His life, the power of His teachings inspire us to love and to care for our fellow men and women.

On this day we should be especially grateful that here in America we all have the freedom to worship God in our own way, for our faith is purest when it is the offering of a free and joyous spirit. We are a nation of many faiths and beliefs, united in a sense of mutual respect, shared values, and common purpose. Each of our faiths teaches that none of us can live alone, for we all belong to something larger than ourselves. Each teaches that we can see the image of God reflected in our fellow men and women, whatever their creed or color. Each teaches that our responsibilities to God are reflected in our responsibilities to each other. "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" the Rabbi Hillel asked. "But if I am only for myself, who am I?"

Part of the miracle of this season is that each of us can hear what Abraham Lincoln called "the better angels of our nature." As we gather with our families, our friends; as we hear stories of our parents and grand-

parents; as we delight in the laughter of our own children and grandchildren, we're reminded again that we are part of a great sea of humanity including those who came before us and those who will live long afterward. That sense of connection is part of the joy of this season, part of the reason why, no matter how cold it gets, our hearts remain warm.

As we rejoice in the best of what life can be, we ask ourselves how we can act in the spirit of the season not just on this day but on every day. As we look into the eyes of our children filled with life and laughter and promise, we're reminded of our most sacred obligation: nurturing the next generation. Every father and mother must do whatever we can to help our children live decent and responsible lives so they can be the people God intended them to be. And as the National Conference of Catholic Bishops declared in a pastoral letter, "No government can love a child, no policy can substitute for a family's care. The undeniable fact is that our children's future is shaped both by the values of their parents and the policies of our Nation." So we must act as parents, and we must also act as citizens.

On this day of all days, we are reminded of our obligations to every child, not just our own. As long as there are children whose parents can't afford to take them to the doctor, as long as there are young people who live in fear that they will die before their time from gang violence and random gunfire, then each of us is diminished. If each of us could find the wisdom, the courage, and the commitment to help bring peace to all our own streets and peace of mind to our own families here in America, we could give a wonderful gift to ourselves, to our children, and our beloved country.

For most of us, this is a day of well-earned rest. But it's also a day when we remember that along with family and community, work gives purpose and structure to our lives. In this country, everyone who is able to work should be able to find work. And everyone who works should be able to support a family. When we restore dignity and security of work for all people, we'll go a long way toward restoring the fabric of life in all our communities. I'm glad that more Americans are

working today than there were last year, but I know we've got a long way to go.

I also want to say a special word of thanks to all those who are working today who may wish they weren't working on this day, from those who care for the sick in our hospitals to those who patrol the streets of our communities. Most of all, we honor the service men and women who stand sentry for our freedom every day of the year. Because of their vigilance on this Christmas Day, our Nation is at peace. And although they may be thousands of miles away, they are close to us today.

To all those who hear me now, wherever this Christmas morning finds you, I wish you the best of holiday seasons, and may God bless you and your family.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:55 a.m. on December 22 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 25.

Statement on the Death of Norman Vincent Peale

December 25, 1993

The name of Dr. Norman Vincent Peale will forever be associated with the wondrously American values of optimism and service. Dr. Peale was an optimist who believed that whatever the antagonisms and complexities of modern life brought us, that anyone could prevail by approaching life with a simple sense of faith. And he served us by instilling that optimism in every Christian and every other person who came in contact with his writings or his hopeful soul. In a productive and giving life that spanned the 20th century, Dr. Peale lifted the spirits of millions and millions of people who were nourished and sustained by his example, his teaching, and his giving. While the Clinton family and all Americans mourn his loss, there is some poetry in his passing on a day when the world celebrates the birth of Christ, an idea that was central to Dr. Peale's message and Dr. Peale's work. He will be missed.